

With famous mums like Kim Kardashian and Natasha Hamilton on board, a trend to ‘eat’ your afterbirth is growing in popularity. **JAINE BLACKMAN** reports

# Placenta eating that’s a sight easier to stomach

**M**ENTION women eating their own placentas and you’re likely to elicit some squeamish groans... well, it did in our office.

But there’s growing popularity among new mums who believe ingesting their baby’s afterbirth – the sac which nourished them in the womb – can provide an energy boost, encourage breast milk production and even prevent post-natal depression.

While the science behind it has yet to be conclusively proven, there’s no doubt it’s gaining fans, even from among the rich and famous.

Reality star Kim Kardashian, Mad Men actress January Jones and Natasha Hamilton from Atomic Kitten have all been singing the practice’s praises.

But unlike celebrity chef Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall who caused a stir when on a TV show he fried a placenta with shallots and garlic, flambéed and puréed it and served it to 20 relatives and friends of the mother as a pate on focaccia bread, they have been taking it in capsule form.

Oxford independent midwife Lou Pouget, who is collecting data on the effects, says: “A lot of people are uneasy with eating it raw – also you would find it very difficult to eat a whole one (they are about one third of the size of baby) – so encapsulating them into edible capsules seemed like a solution.”

Lou, who is married with four daughters aged 18 to 30, has been a midwife for 15 years.

“I had a very positive birth with my last child and decided that this was a really important job and how, when and with whom you give birth is so important – as women we have lost our way somewhat and we need to reclaim birth.”

Then aged 35, Lou trained as a mature student and has since delivered more than 1,000 babies.

“I have always had a fascination with placentas and spent hours looking at them and how the union of mother, baby and placenta was so entwined,” she explains.

“I have been doing placenta prints for families who wish to have one for years and many parents have taken placentas home to plant in the garden – maybe under a tree.

“So I was always aware that some women did consume placentas.

“In most other mammals the mother consumes the placenta soon after birth – it replenishes the nutrients she may have lost through birth. What we now understand is that placenta is very rich in hormones.”

She has eaten placenta pate herself, when it was served at a naming ceremony.

“It just tastes like chicken liver pate,” she says.

About two years ago she completed an Independent Placenta Encapsulation Network course, so now along with raw placenta and smoothies which can be made at the birth “if the mother would like to consume/replenish her hormone level asap”, she will take it away and bring it back in a more user-friendly form.



Independent midwife Lou Pouget with capsules made from placenta

Picture: Jon Lewis

Making sure correct temperatures are maintained, Lou steams the placenta with chillies, garlic and ginger for about 30-50 minutes.

It goes into a dehydrator for at least 12 hours, then it’s ground up and put into capsules.

She suggests mums take one or two a day for at least six weeks, start at three days after the birth.

“They can be stored for a year – or freeze them ready for the menopause,” says Lou, who explains the placenta is rich in hormones.

She can make 150 to 300 capsules depending on the size of a placentas. and the cost is £150.

“I have now encapsulated over 100 placentas – the feedback I am getting is that they without a doubt ward off postnatal depression (rising in

this country sadly) and they boost breastmilk production,” she says.

“I am collating evidence as we need more research into the effects and outcomes.

She has only noted one mother having an adverse reaction to them – she reported feeling sick.

“She was a vegan and maybe the effects are stronger than we think and her body was not used to digesting a meat like product,” says Lou, who has provided capsules for “a famous mum living locally”.

“However other vegans have had great results so it may not have been placenta related.”

Lou’s youngest daughter is currently doing A-levels and is interested in nutrition.

“So I’ll encourage her to eat her placenta when she gives birth.”

She concedes that in the past, placenta eating has not had the greatest reputation.

“It definitely had a mad hippies label attached to it but that’s changing – hippies aren’t as mad as people think,” she says.

▲ For more details of Lou Pouget’s services, see [privatebirthing.com](http://privatebirthing.com)

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